

SPANISH GOLD BURIED ON TEXADA ?

Just imagine - a gold and silver treasure, hidden from early British explorers by the Spanish, buried in an extinct Texada volcano with the help of Tla'amin chiefs!

This imaginary tale grew wilder as 14-year old Bruce McKelvie invented it on the spot to entertain his friends in his Van Anda woodshed. He had conned them (Tom Sawyer style) into doing his weekly chore - sawing and splitting the family's firewood - in exchange for relating this tantalizing tale. He was so convincing that, over the years, several friends actually searched for the fabled gold, to no avail!

Bruce Alistair ("Pinkie") McKelvie (1889-1960) moved to Texada in 1898 when his father, legendary master mechanic and blacksmith Alex McKelvie, was hired to set up and operate the furnace in Van Anda's smelter.

Young Bruce's newspaper career started in January 1900 at the age of 10 when the two major mining companies in Van Anda decided to sponsor a town newspaper, the *Coast Miner*. Bruce "helped" the adults set up the huge press and was eager to hawk the newspaper on the streets of Van Anda, often being given a dime and told to "keep the change." He also substituted as "printer's devil" (apprentice) when young Will Raper was sick.



When the smelter furnace was sold and sent to Ladysmith in 1903 the McKelvies moved with it.

By now Bruce had caught the journalism bug and continued his career at various BC newspapers. In 1913 the *Vancouver Province* hired him as a reporter to cover the police and city hall beats. After 30 years in Vancouver Bruce became the managing editor of the *Victoria Colonist*. He later served on various BC government delegations and was director of the BC Historical Association.

As evidenced by the "Spanish gold" story, Bruce's creativity and imagination inspired him to write several novels and non-fiction books based on BC history themes.

"He was seldom averse to sensationalizing the past ... if it meant getting more people to pay attention," wrote *BC Bookworld*.

In a 1941 article Bruce expressed surprise when, after more than 30 years, a stranger on Vancouver Island whispered to him about the "secret" stash of Spanish gold buried on Texada.

It seems that the magic of a well-told tale lives forever!